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December 18, 1962

WASHINGTON EMBASSY REPORTS RE EVENTS IN CUBA

December 15: For the last three weeks Cuba has been in a form of political doldrums. This may be no more sinister than calmness and sense of let down after the storm, but the atmosphere strongly resembles the feeling we had before the Escalante affair broke last spring.

There is a notable lack of leadership and sense of direction. Since Mikoyan's departure Fidel Castro has made only one brief official appearance namely at the funeral of the head of the National Bank and other victims of the air disaster at the end of November but he did not speak. Since then he is thought to have been somewhere in the mountains of Oriente. Porticos too has been out of public view since that date. Rodriguez is in Moscow, Blas Roca somewhere in Europe. Guevara and Hart are acting as Government spokesmen for the time being.

Treatment by the press of the news about U.S.S.R. and China suggests that Cuba is trying to face both ways or perhaps even neither. Improbable as it sounds there are, we believe, among young Cuban patriots some who would willing to try to stand alone rather than suffer further affront to their national pride. Intensive drilling by militia and practice flying by MIGs suggests that the January 1 parade may be designed to be bigger and better than ever in order to impress the Cubans with their own military strength and foster the faint nationalist spirit. Fidel Castro himself is still undoubtedly the key figure. His curious behaviour since losing face is unlike that of most Prime Ministers but is not out of character.

December 15: The Cuban domestic situation is quiet, but there is insecurity in the government and in the population. Subsequent to the expropriations of medium-sized and small merchants, terror, arrests and executions have increased. Last week talk of possible monetary reform set off a scare of panic buying and withdrawals of money from banks. People believe that the death of Minister of Economy Cepero Bonilla will mean a postponement of plans for monetary reform.

According to other reports, Fidel Castro is frequently drunk. Members of the government have secretly gotten ready for their departure and have to get visas for Switzerland. A leading member of ORI, Chief of Staff of the Air Force Sergio del Valle, and Rabelo, Chief of Rural Housing, allegedly fled from Cuba a couple of days ago with an airplane.

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Counter revolutionary sources state that a concrete runway is being built on night and day shifts running about 3 kilometers into a cave named Cari Blanco, in the province of Bartolome east of Ramedios.

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